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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7408
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1213
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5422
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1785
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2006

In Today's Papers

Court Chief on Secularism, National Unity
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report the head of the Court of Appeals (Yargitay) Osman Arslan, said in a speech to mark the opening of the new judicial year that freedoms cannot be exploited in a way to harm the state. "The state apparatus cannot be based on religion. The judiciary is responsible for protecting secularism," Arslan added that political administrators, too, should abide by judicial rules. He stated there was no ethnic discrimination in Turkey, stressing that privileges demanded by citing democracy and human rights were designed to undermine national unity.

Annan Discusses Lebanon International Force with Turks
All papers report United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said during a joint press briefing with Prime Minister Erdogan in Ankara yesterday that the UN peacekeeping force for Lebanon will not be tasked to disarm Hezbollah. Annan said Turkey is a regional player and noted that Turkey's role is important for the implementation of UN resolution 1701. He hinted that Turkey would send some 1,000 troops to participate in the peace force. Milliyet reports Turkish troops will be deployed between the Litani River and the blue line that separates Lebanon and Israel. Radikal says the deployment of Turkish soldiers to Lebanon will kick off on September 25. Annan also met with Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul and President Sezer before departing Ankara yesterday afternoon.

In a second day of protests, hundreds of youths clashed with riot police in Ankara on Wednesday to protest the parliament's decision to send troops to Lebanon. Demonstrators also blocked off roads and threw stones at offices of the ruling AK Party. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd, detaining 35.

Editorial Commentary on Turkish Participation in UNIFIL
Murat Yetkin, writing in the liberal-intellectual Radikal,

speculates on the causes of the public opposition to participation: "Turkey has made a decision in spite of the public opinion. We should start thinking about the reasons for the growing opposition. PKK terrorism is certainly one of the main factors for the negative attitude toward Lebanon deployment. People don't understand why this force is acceptable but to use force against the PKK is not. On the other hand, there is an ongoing anti-Western campaign, tolerated by the ruling AKP, which has had a significant impact on public opinion as well."

Fikret Bila observes in the mainstream Milliyet that there are risks to participation: There are two risk-filled issues which pose a threat to peace and have potential for creating armed conflict. One of them is if and when Hezbollah will give up its weapons. The second is if and when Israel decides to start new operations against Syria, Iran and other parts of Lebanon, using the presence of UNIFIL as a buffer for its future military actions. In the near future, Hezbollah's actions regarding disarmament and the Israeli policy in the aftermath of UNIFIL deployment are equally important."

General Yasar Buyukanit Comments on UNIFIL and the Struggle against the PKK

Hurriyet, Vatan, Radikal and others: Speaking to journalists at Pakistani Embassy's Military day reception, newly installed Chief of General Staff General Yasar Buyukanit said regarding Turkey's UNIFIL participation, "We are not going to Lebanon - we are being sent there. The scope, location and in how many regions Turkey is going to provide humanitarian assistance, is not yet clear. After the region is clarified, a sufficient force will be allocated." Radikal reports Buyukanit as saying that "Turkish troops in Lebanon would not go beyond the tasks given to them by the parliamentary motion. Turkey's main goal is humanitarian aid and when we go there we will

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be protecting our own people like the Red Crescent, State Water Works and Ground forces." Responding to a question about the families of martyrs [members of the military killed in the line of duty], Buyukanit answered with a Turkish proverb, saying that "A fire burns where it falls. We have great understanding for every sort of reaction the families of martyrs would give, I respect them.

Consequently, whatever might be said, I kiss the hands of those mothers of martyrs." Buyukanit's remarks were contrasted with those Prime Minister Erdogan made the previous day, widely interpreted as showing "insensitivity" to the families of "martyrs."

EU Lauds, AI Slams Turkey on Ongoing Torture, Anti-Terror Law
Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman report Council of Europe's Committee for the prevention of torture and inhuman treatment (CPT) said in a report torture and mistreatment in Turkish police stations, prisons and psychiatric institutions is declining compared to previous years. The CPT, however, noted that mistreatment by law enforcement officials continues in different parts of the country, calling on Turkish authorities to pursue their efforts to combat all forms of abuse. On the other hand, the London-based Amnesty International (AI) strongly criticized in a report the court cases launched under Turkey's new anti-terror law. AI Europe and Central Asia Programs Director Nicola Duckworth said despite pledges made by the Turkish government, evidence obtained through torture continued to be accepted by penal courts. Duckworth said although the European Court of Human Rights rulings on behalf of plaintiffs grant them the right to retrial in Turkey, Turkish judges and prosecutors handling of such cases was 'Kafkaesque.'

Transatlantic Trends 2006 Report

Sabah, Vatan, Radikal and others: A report titled "Transatlantic Trends 2006" prepared by Think Tank organization German Marshall Fund showed that only 7% of the Turkish people support President Bush's international policies. Vatan says according to this survey 43% of the Turkish people are sympathetic towards Iran. While the negative feelings for the US and the EU are increasing, sympathy for Iran increases as well.

A Nuclear Iran: Editorial Opinion

Zafer Atay observes in the economic-political daily Dunya that Turkey "will have to take action against Iran" eventually: "Regardless of the good bilateral relationship at the moment, Turkey

will have to take action against Iran eventually due to Tehran's insistence on becoming a nuclear power. There are indications of Iran trying to export its Shiite influence to a vast geography, from Palestine to Syria and Lebanon to Saudi Arabia. Once that area of influence is achieved, Iran will undoubtedly use this power against others. Even though we share a common border, Iran has always suffered from political instability, like most of our neighbors. The issue of a threat coming from Iran as a nuclear power is something we will not be able to avoid. We had better start making plans right now to counter this threat if and when it occurs."

TV Highlights

NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- Following the parliamentary approval of Turkey's participation in the international force for Lebanon, the ruling AKP government will instruct the Turkish General Staff to prepare for deployment as well as authorize the Turkish Foreign Ministry to carry out talks on the issue with the UN.

- Turkey's chief EU negotiator Ali Babacan is in the Netherlands to join Thursday the opening of screening procedures in judiciary and fundamental rights in Turkey.

- The Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) will be held in the southeastern city

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of Gaziantep on September 9-12.

International News

- Britain's Daily Telegraph reports NATO is pressuring France, Germany, Italy, and Turkey to take part in combat operations against Taliban fighters in the south of Afghanistan.

- US President Bush said the threat of Shiite extremism coming from Iran and Hezbollah was as great as the threat posed by groups such as al-Qaida.

- Financial Times claim Olli Rehn, the EU enlargement commissioner, is seeking to persuade both Turkey and Cyprus to take the ports question to the European Court of Justice.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON